

"SPELL EYE."

## BEHIND THE BARN.

BY G. M. S. HORTON.

"I WAS down at the red school-house yesterday afternoon, and such a clatter as the children kept up I never heard in all my life!" said Chicken Plump to the Gobbler, just after breakfast one day.

"What was the row about?" asked the gobbler, keeping an eye on Mother Blackey, who was digging industriously in the garden. The fact was she had bet a worm with the gobbler the day before, and the gobbler won, and was a little anxious about his share.

"I don't know just exactly, but here's something that blew out of the window when I was standing there, and when a little girl came out to look for it, I tucked it under one wing and ran off as fast as I could."

"That was very wrong," said the gobbler, who had

been carried to Sunday school one day when he was too small to even gobble. The little girl who lived at the farm-house had taken him in her pocket, you see. "Where's the paper?"

"I hid it under the four-quart measure. You stay here, and I'll run and get it."

In a few minutes Chicken Plump returned from the barn with the paper under her wing.

"Let's come out behind the pig-pen, and be all alone," she said. So they went on tip-toe down behind the barn.

"Do you think I've made a strike?" asked Chicken Plump, eagerly, as she showed the paper.

The gobbler scratched his head with the air of a man who isn't quite sure what to say.

"Pooh!" said a voice behind them, "'tisin't worth

a cent! You may rely on that."

They turned around, and there was the pig looking straight out at them through a crack in the sty.

"That's only spelling. The last time I ran away I hid in the ash barrel down at the school-house, and when they weren't looking I peeped in at the window and they had spelling-books with leaves in 'em, exactly like this."

"I'd like first-rate to learn reading and spelling," said Chicken Plump. "The farmer leaves his paper 'most every week at the barn, and all we can make out are pictures of houses and things we can see for ourselves any day."

"I'm just your man," said the pig. "You know the boy that brings my dinner from the farm-house? Well, he most always has a book with yellow covers when he comes down, and he gets so excited about Indians and buffalos that he reads right out loud, and I've picked up a whole lot of learning I can tell you; and if you'll put right in and study, I'll teach you too. When will you begin?"

"Now — right away," said the gobbler, swallowing a gobble of emotion at the pig's kindness. "When a man's breast is full —"

"That reminds me," interrupted the pig, "you'll have to wait till after dinner, for if I should get faint, I'd have to stop if it's in the middle of the alphabet."

At half-past two there was a great assemblage down by the pig-pen — the whole barn-yard, in fact, with the exception of the yellow hen, who tumbled off the roost the night before, and who said she "didn't care whether school kept or not." But she promised to walk up and down the yard all the time the rest were away so as to make the farmer think she was a crowd.

They studied like beavers all the afternoon, and the pig decided that there would be a grand examination and review the next day at half-past ten.

Very few of the fowls slept that night, and seven chickens fell off the roost at one time, trying to spell "moon" for themselves. Chicken Plump, Mother Blackey and the gobbler, after studying as long as any came in at the west window, fell into a troubled slumber and had the nightmare almost all night.

At the appointed hour they were all at the pig-pen — that is, all but the yellow hen who was to make a procession of herself up in front of the barn. The pig took the leaf from Chicken Plump, and told them to fall into line. The gobbler came first, the Shanghai next, and so on down to the yellow chicks.

"Now, when any one misses a question, down he

goes," said the pig, clearing his throat.

"Do you mean you'll knock us over?" asked the littlest chicken, away at the end of the line, with her knees almost shaking each other out of joint.

"Don't be so preliminary," said the pig. "I mean that you go down below the next one." Then the little chicken shut her eyes and stood on one leg during the entire lesson, wondering where she was going if she missed.

"Spell eye," said the pig, suddenly.

"Who?" asked the gobbler.

"You," said the pig.

"What's the word?" asked the gobbler, in a very weak voice.

"Eye; you've got two of them in your own head," said the Pig. "Come, go on."

"Which one of them do you want me to spell?" said the gobbler still more faintly, shutting first one eye and then the other to see if they wouldn't spell themselves in some way.

"Next!" shouted the pig, and the Shanghai got it right the first time trying.

"Look here," said the gobbler, "I didn't know as you would let a fellow have the same letter twice in a word, or I could have spelled it right away."

"Go down," said the pig sternly. So the gobbler went down and the pig went on.

They got along first-rate till they came to the gobbler again, and the pig gave out the word "Hay."

The gobbler hesitated a moment, and then a smile spread nearly back to his tail, as he said, affably:

"'Twasn't my turn this time. Give the little ones a chance."

But the pig wouldn't listen, and told him to go on.

"What's the first letter?" whispered the gobbler to Chicken Plump.

"H," said the chicken softly.

"H," began the gobbler with all is might.

"Right," said the pig.

"Oh, I know," continued the gobbler. "H, carry one, and a-y, hooray!"

"Stop that dancing!" shouted the pig. "What do you mean by 'carry one'?"

"Why, don't you know?" asked the gobbler. "Well, I'm sorry for you, that's all."

The pig turned the paper upside down and all around, but he couldn't find out. The fact is, the gobbler had heard the farmer talking to himself as he was figuring up the price of eggs in the barn.

"You may be right," said the pig, "but it doesn't sound so, any way."

"Of course I'm right," said the gobbler, and he insisted upon going up to the head at once.

"No, you don't," said the Shanghai.

"Who says so?" replied the gobbler.

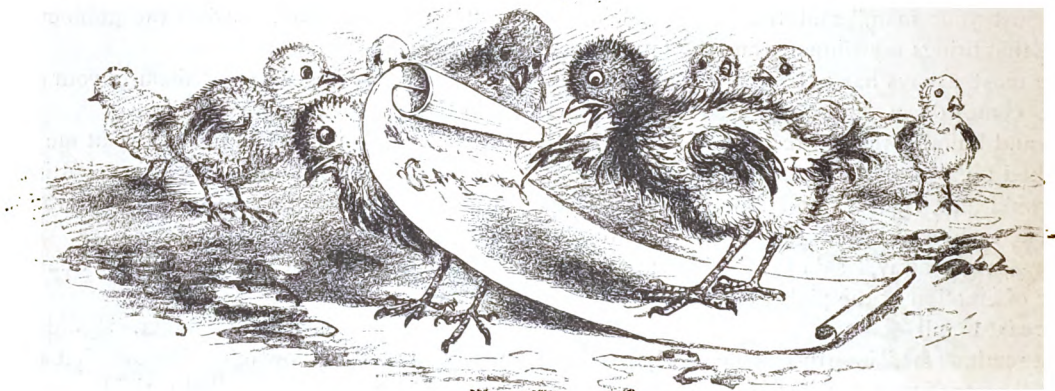
"I do, the worst kind," answered the Shanghai.

"Who'll be my friend in this affair?" cried the gobbler, stepping out of the rank and shaking his claw under the Shanghai's very nose.

"Take a demerit," said the pig, sternly.

dug in the round box by the harness room," whispered the gobbler to Chicken Plump, just before the battle began.

They tried to have some style about the fight, but it didn't work. The little chickens acted as the ring, taking hold of hands, and stretching around as far as they could. But after the first minute it was pretty hard telling which was the ring and which the fighters, for the chickens got so mixed up with the shanghai and gobbler that they could not keep on their feet at all, and one of the chickens (who expected to be a



WRITING THEIR RESIGNATION.

"Bring on your demerit — bring on anything!" shouted the gobbler, whose blood was up.

"Now, I say don't," said the pig, soothingly, "don't go and break up the instruction in this way. Be a man and a scholar!"

"Not much!" answered the gobbler, preparing himself for instant action.

"Come on then!" cried the Shanghai. So you see there was no backing out, and the preparations went sadly on.

"If I fall, you will find four fresh worms already

rooster if he lived long enough,) was stepped on seventeen times; and just as the fight grew interesting the yellow hen came rushing down to say that the farmer was coming. So everything broke up at once, the pig by special request swallowing the spelling-book; and the little links of the ring sat up half the night writing out their resignation, and here it is:

"PLEASE DON'T ASK US TO BE RING  
ANY MORE.

ALL THE CHICKENS."

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THERE was an old lady of Brocking,  
Whose intelligence really was shocking;  
As sure as you live,  
The true time she could give  
By a glance at the *clocks* on her *stocking*.